

**South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority**  
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Testimony to the Environment Committee

**Proposed Bill 5108, An Act Preserving Certain Horse Trails**

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*The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority is a non-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the State. Within the 20 member towns of our water district, we own and operate a public water system, which includes 18 reservoirs, 4 surface water treatment plants and 7 ground water treatment plants. We serve over 427,000 water consumers approximately 53 million gallons of water per day and provide fire protection throughout our service area. The source of this water is a system of watershed and aquifer areas that cover about 120 square miles within 24 municipalities. Almost 27,000 acres of these watershed and aquifer areas are protected as open space as a result of the Authority's ownership while an additional 900 acres are protected with a conservation easement.*

The Regional Water Authority has reviewed proposed House Bill 5108, *An Act Preserving Certain Horse Trails*, and has some concerns about the bill and whether it provides for the rights of the property owner. The Regional Water Authority is committed to providing passive recreation use of its land when that use is compatible with its primary purpose of providing and assuring an adequate supply of pure water at a reasonable cost to the people of its district. As such, it has an extensive trail system of 57 miles of trails located in Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Killingworth, Madison, Northford, Orange, Seymour, West Haven, and Woodbridge. People who purchase a Regional Water Authority Recreation Permit are allowed to hike, bike and cross country ski in designated areas and fish in five reservoirs. Horseback riding is allowed in two areas by special permit only.

Approximately 2,500 acres of land owned by the Regional Water Authority are designated for recreation use. Because these areas are on public drinking water supply watersheds and aquifers, any change of use to allow recreation is given extensive study and evaluation to ensure that water quality is not impaired by the recreational activities that would occur on that land. Additionally, any change of use requested by a water company must be approved by the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

We notice that proposed House Bill 5108 would preserve the Metacomet, Mattabesett and Monadnock Trail System for equine use. The Regional Water Authority has been working with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association for three years to extend the Metacomet, Mattabesett and Monadnock Trail System across our Genesee property in North Guilford. The proposed trail on Regional Water Authority property is designed for hiking and is not appropriate for horse riding due to its rocky nature. If the Committee decides to pass the bill, the Regional Water Authority urges the Committee to consider including appropriate language in the bill that will give the property owner the right to determine if equine use should take place on its property.

We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions members of the committee may have and to work with the committee on substitute language to address our concerns.